



Speech by

**Terry Rogers**

**MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE**

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## **WATER AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr ROGERS** (Redcliffe—Lib) (9.47 pm): I rise to speak to the Water Amendment Bill 2006. The purpose of the bill is to amend the Water Act 2000 to establish a transparent decision-making body called the Queensland Water Commission. The commission's main area of responsibility is south-east Queensland. However, it is assumed that in the future the commission will also be directed to operate in other regions of Queensland.

The commission will advise the minister on issues relating to water supply and demand management, including infrastructure development, water-saving devices and water restrictions. The commission will also set objectives for water service providers, namely councils, and will oversee regional water security programs. The legislation also requires water service providers to pay the Water Commission by an annual levy. The water service providers must also comply with the system operating plans or face fines.

But let us not pretend: this bill has nothing to do with building dams, nothing to do with pipelines, nothing to do with water conservation and nothing to do with addressing the current water crisis. This bill is driven by cost shifting, blame shifting and the typical showmanship media tactics of this disgraceful Beattie government.

To confuse the issue and to ensure that the Premier does not rock the boat in making firm and long-term decisions on water resource preservation, the bill allows the commission, which is directed by the minister, to impose its own water restrictions irrespective of any water restrictions that are already in place. It also allows the commission to impose heavy fines on anyone who does not comply.

This mismanaged water crisis is another part of Labor's legacy of inaction. This is just another chapter in the Beattie Labor government's eight years of neglect of Queensland—like the Queensland Health crisis. Like the supposed resolution to that crisis, this bill is simply Beattie government window-dressing and posturing in the hope of fooling the public into believing that it has control over infrastructure planning in this state.

This government had the ability to solve the problem, but it has left it too late. We on this side of the chamber want to know what it is going to say to the people when they go to their taps, turn them on, and nothing but mud comes out? As we have come to see and expect, the Premier, with all of his showmanship characteristics, has come out in a flurry and made a great big announcement about water without one real minute of planning, only last-minute advice to council mayors and stakeholders for a media show and a complete lack of substance in the associated legislation despite the promises contained in the media hype.

Water is one of our most critical natural resources and, although Labor does not care about health, Queensland was relying on Labor to take the wheel and actually make decisions to alleviate the current crisis. We thought Labor had finally woken up and seen the need for statewide management of water. However, Labor failed to discuss or seek support by councils for any of the initiatives put forward until it was too late.

The Premier's legacy of inaction has failed Queensland and we have had enough. This government's neglect of our water resource and lack of proper planning is a recipe for disaster, and it is the residents of Queensland who are going to be left high and dry—a bit like our dams actually.

Despite encouraging population growth—and every time the Premier gets on his feet we hear about the 1,500 people coming to Queensland every week—this Labor government has failed to manage this growth properly, leaving Queensland with a massive shortage in water storage. Those opposite should stop wasting our time with petty committee establishments, more bureaucracy and jobs for their Labor mates. Now is the time to start building dams and pipelines. We must encourage water conservation to ensure that Queensland has a water supply for the future so that we will always have water to drink. The government needs to get the priorities right to protect our future by providing real long-term and considered water amendments and strategies.